

Government Orders

metropolitan Toronto and in cities such as Brampton are greater than they were two years ago and that families do require the assistance of the provincial government to a greater extent than ever before. That means they need the support of the federal government to pay those budgets. This has not been recognized by the federal government. It continues to keep its head in the sand and refuses to acknowledge the importance of reforming the social policy system instead of burying people under budgetary items.

Subsequent to the introduction of this legislation, there has been a series of media accounts as to what it means to be poor in Canada. During a debate like this we should pause and think about some of the statistics and the people in this country. Do not forget that this is a process begun 50 years ago to shore up the economic reality that from time to time we go into a tailspin and from city to city, from different parts of the country, people cannot compete and cannot live in the economic system.

One of the failures of Conservative policy, not only in Canada but in the United States, has been to balance the economic and social objectives of our society. If you look at the constitutional front, we have this desire for an economic union which was trashed on the weekend in Montreal because people asked: "Where is the other side of the coin? Where is your social policy? What are you going to do to help people out?"

This marketplace that we talk about, and we on this side of the House support very strongly, also needs to protect people. It is there to serve us, to further our individual interest and to further our small business. It is not there simply to enslave us in such a way that we end up being bankrupt after a lifetime of work.

The fact that dozens of people at a meeting came to this conclusion and had to quite literally re-route the constitutional process in order to make their point is again an indication that this government does not understand the significant feeling to protect the social policy of this country.

As an aside, I would point out the constant reminder of this government about deficit.

It is very interesting that it should constantly stand up and remind the House of how poorly it has done on the

only objective it set for this country. In order to respond to the recession in the early 1980s, the Liberal government ran up a deficit for two years, a serious deficit. Since then, this government has treated this as being the reason for the collapse in the federal treasury. In the meantime, it has created by conservative estimates about \$210 billion debt of its own. If you look at a similar parallel conservative coalition in the United States, in which Ronald Reagan and now George Bush convinced Americans that they had to vote for the Republican party in order to save their treasury, what do we find out? We find out that the Republican party has increased the debt more substantially than generations of Democratic governments.

An hon. member: A trillion dollars.

Mr. Walker: A trillion dollars, I am told by my colleague. If you look at a parallel development in Canada, the debt created by this government, whose whole *raison d'être* was to eliminate debt and to create economic growth, is astounding.

It is nice for the minister to remind us of the government's failure, but I think instead of reminding us of its failure it should at least have accomplished one of its objectives. Heaven knows that the people who need money on social policy, who need money on medicare, who need money on post-secondary education, are doing without. It is about time that this government understood just exactly the price being paid by a false objective which it has not even come anywhere close to fulfilling.

According to an article that appeared in the *Globe and Mail* on December 19 of last year, the average family income for Canadians has dipped for the first time since 1985. Canada had more than one million children living in poverty last year, an increase of 150,000 from 1989. The last time Canada had more than a million poor people was in 1985 when 1,047,000 were below the federal data-gathering agencies' low income cutoff line. These statistics all come from Statistics Canada.

This report also revealed in a very challenging fashion the difficulty that Canadian families were having, even during the surge in the economy of the late 1980s. When that so-called surge in the economy failed, family incomes dropped by 1.6 per cent. Young parents, families headed by a single mother, and two parent families trying